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California Recreational Trails Plan



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State of California
Department of Parks and Recreation
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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	3
II.	Trails and the State Parks Mission	4
III.	Statewide Trails Office Mission	5
IV.	The California Recreational Trails Plan	6
V.	A Basic Trails Philosophy	7
VI.	History of Trails	9
VII.	Societal Benefits of Trails	11
VIII.	California's Changing Demographics	15
IX.	Program Goals	16
	♦ Goal for Funding	16
	♦ Goal for Trails Inventory	17
	♦ Goal for Regional and Statewide Land Use Planning	18
	♦ Goal for Trail Advocacy & Collaboration	19
	♦ Goal for Trail Research	20
	♦ Goal for Statewide Trail Stewardship	21
	♦ Goal for Encouraging Public Use of Trails	22
	♦ Goal for Trail Accessibility	23
	♦ Goal for Multi-Use Trail Cooperation	24
	♦ Goal for Private Property Owners	25
	♦ Goal for Trails Program Leadership	25
	♦ Goal for the California Riding and Hiking Trail	26

Appendix A: 2000 California Trails Corridor Map

Appendix B: Most recent California Riding and Hiking Trail map

Appendix C: Public Resources Code 5073.5 -- 5074

Appendix A - B - C are not part of this document. A hard copy of this document is available from the Department's Statewide Trails Office at Tel: 916-651-6915

I. Introduction

California State Parks manages more than 3,000 miles of trails. These range from meandering and narrow footpaths that may provide beach access or entry into a primeval redwood forest to paved trails that can easily accommodate hundreds of bicyclists, in-line skaters, runners, equestrians and hikers each day, along with wheelchair users.

The Department's trail management program in its earliest form began with California Conservation Corp or park crews blazing trails to allow the public to access park natural and cultural features. That original informal trails program has evolved into a more formal and well-planned system that addresses resource protection, ADA access issues, and the changing face of trail user needs.



For more than 75 years following the establishment of Big Basin as the first state park, narrow and meandering footpaths were seen as meeting the vast majority of trail design needs. Today's trail managers and planners must address the needs of a multitude of users, including mountain bike riders, equestrians, runners, inline skaters, and those who require accommodations for their physical limitations. Yet, these ever-increasing demands for trail access appropriate to specific needs must remain compatible with other park and trail users' needs, while assuring continued protection of each park's resources.

This California Trails Plan contains two key components. The first identifies the mission and the overall role of the Department's Statewide Trails Office in policy, planning, and in funding the State Park System's trails programs. Secondly, the plan includes the goals and related action guidelines that will direct the future actions of the Statewide Trails Office as they are related to trails programs within the system and in its wider, statewide and national roles.

II. Trails and the State Parks Mission

A hierarchy of mandates directs the management of the Trails Program. The most basic mandate is the Department's Mission, which is to:

Provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

The Department's mission directs that staff must create opportunities for high-quality recreation, and trails in their many forms are a major component of the efforts to meet the spirit of that mandate.

State park general plans, management plans and legal mandates, such as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), provide additional guidance for the planning, development and maintenance of trails.



III. Statewide Trails Office Mission

The thousands of miles of trails to be found in California offer its citizens a bounty of treasures. Trails provide countless opportunities to impart a sense of well being, while simultaneously increasing our awareness of our surrounding natural and cultural treasures. By offering a mixture of recreational opportunities in settings that generally remove us from the hustle and bustle of modern living, trails and greenways improve the quality of life in both urban and rural areas.

No single entity oversees or coordinates trail-related efforts throughout California. Perhaps the agency most appropriate and able to attempt such a challenge is the California State Park Statewide Trails Office. Its involvement, from technical and policy expertise to funding, extends far beyond trails that lie only within the boundaries of State Parks. The office has an overall vision and related mission for California's trails, which is to:

Establish and maintain a system of trails and greenways that serves California's diverse population while respecting and protecting the integrity of its equally diverse natural and cultural resources. The system should be accessible to all Californians for improving their physical and mental well-being by presenting opportunities for recreation, transportation, and education, each of which provides enhanced environmental and societal benefits.



From this basic vision, the Statewide Trails Office responds to both the reality of an ever-expanding public interest and demand for trails and greenways and to a legislative mandate to complete and periodically update a California Recreational Trails Plan.

IV. The California Recreational Trails Plan

Associated with the combined mission and vision is the requirement that California State Parks produce a Recreational Trails Plan that provides guidance for establishing and maintaining California's trail systems. This includes integrating state parks' trails-related program efforts as much as possible with local government agencies and private organizations' trail systems, their planning, funding, development, operation, and maintenance.

The original California Recreational Trails Plan was completed in 1978, as directed by statute. Although this plan served the state for more than 22 years, tremendous changes in population, demographics, the economy, and in the recreational interests of Californians require that it be updated to more accurately reflect today's societal needs.



V. A Basic Trails Philosophy

Central to the California Recreational Trails Plan is the recognition that our world is one of finite resources and, since demand increases steadily for these resources, insightful management is of utmost concern. The state's trail system must be designed to utilize resources in ways that benefit all users and their appropriate uses. This entails providing adequate accommodation and accessibility, rather than focusing on individual user groups. The increased sharing of resources sometimes creates friction between the diverse user groups vying for more trail space. This Trail Plan acknowledges that a certain amount of friction is inevitable, and therefore focuses on planning and communication to minimize the differences and optimize the benefits derived from these precious resources.

California's citizens generally take a great interest in environmental issues, including support for clean air, clean water, parks, resource preservation, acquisition, and recreation opportunities. This has been demonstrated in recent surveys on environmental issues and in the passage of Proposition 12, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000.

There also is a direct correlation between health of the California economy and the ability of state and local governments to raise additional revenues. A strong and healthy economy translates to increased tax revenues providing government agencies more opportunities for enhancing trails within their jurisdictions. In the late 1990s California's economy was booming and many local jurisdictions proclaimed a "surplus" for the first time in many years; however, parks and trails didn't always see increased funding as local governments used their additional revenues for higher priority spending for long-neglected police and fire protection, roadway repairs and schools.

The passage of Propositions 13 and 218, which limit local governments' abilities to raise revenue through tax on property assessments and other special taxes has also impacted the amounts of funding available for trails. Local governments in the poorest areas of the state are particularly hard hit because property taxes on assessed values are usually quite low. Taxpayers in those areas, as well as those in many of the more affluent areas of the state, historically have been opposed to general tax increases and are equally reluctant to pass any special taxes that could be used to support parks, greenways and trails. Additionally, land that was developed in earlier years without the benefit of long-term trail planning, now has little opportunity to incorporate desired open space in built-out city blocks or suburban neighborhoods.

Plans for optimal use of trail resources must be in concert with the objective of natural and cultural resource protection. Any decisions on resource use affect

not only California residents and visitors, but our natural and cultural habitat as well. If we make responsible decisions concerning preservation of our resources, we will succeed in our custodial duties to the environment while at the same time providing enjoyment for current and future generations. Through well designed, constructed, and maintained trails, we will accomplish optimal public access while accommodating resource conservation.

Providing the public with increased access to trails and greenways is not enough; we must also strive to promote the abundant benefits derived from them. While recreation and transportation are the most obvious trail benefits, others include energy conservation, environmental and habitat protection, and improved physical and mental health. Informing the community of these significant benefits expands public awareness of the advantages that trails and greenways offer to the individual and to society as a whole. Gaining public support thereby encourages policy-makers to support trails and greenways and to increase funding to better manage all of California's diverse resources.

Improving relationships and interaction between government entities and the private sector will be necessary for the effective development of a well-planned and managed trail and greenway system. Open communication between all levels of government and interested parties enhances the finding of common objectives by making individuals and groups part of the solution. Linking communities and trail advocates in trail planning minimizes land use conflicts and allows for optimal resource use. Joint planning emphasizes the development of interconnected trails in natural settings, and a united effort creates a stronger voice for advancing trail proposals.

The 2001 California Recreational Trails Plan is intended to set direction for today and for the future. It should be used as a guide for creating a trail system for California's ever-growing and diverse population—a trail system that meets the needs of the state's disparate recreational users while protecting our state's vital natural and cultural resources.

VI. History of Trails

Trails have been employed since the dawn of humankind, although America's recognition of a formal trail system did not begin until the early 1900s. The acknowledgment of the need for a formal trail system was evidenced by the creation of the Appalachian Trail in 1921, the nation's first long distance trail. While this trail was to be maintained by volunteers, support for a nationally recognized trail system was mounting. As the nation expanded, public lands and natural resources began to diminish, thereby increasing the urgency for a formal trail system. The 1930s and 1940s brought the formation of the Wilderness Society, which influenced creation of the first federal funding proposals for a national system of wilderness trails. Although these funding proposals were never approved, the Wilderness Society had established a solid foundation for future trail funding.

The 1960 study by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) increased motivation for trail enhancement and congressional involvement. In their report to Congress, the ORRRC reported a swelling of public enthusiasm for recreational trail activity. The public's zeal drove congressional interest, resulting in a flurry of legislation aimed at protecting the environment and improving the national park and trail system. Some of the more significant legislation includes the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and the National Environmental Act of 1966. Foremost among trail-specific legislation were the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the National Trails System Act of 1968—both designed to sustain uninterrupted resource corridors for use by future generations.

Along with the rest of the nation, California's park and trail system also grew. In 1946 the California Riding and Hiking Trail was authorized. This landmark legislation envisioned a 3000-mile loop trail extending from the Mexican border to the Oregon border (see Appendix A). Although the trail was never completed, the plan laid the groundwork for many future long distance trails. The Pacific Crest Trail was subsequently established by the National Trails System Act of 1968.

The growing sentiment for outdoor recreational activity in both California and the nation as a whole inspired the state legislature to approve the California Recreational Trail Act of 1974. This act required that the Department of Parks and Recreation prepare California's first comprehensive plan for trails. The 1978 California Recreational Trails Plan espoused the creation of trail corridors and provided a general guide for the future growth of California's trail system.

Increased Participation in all Trail Activity

Based on the results of the public opinion surveys conducted for the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1987, 1992, and 1997, the percentage of residents participating in all trail activities has increased during the last 10 years. Participation in all recreational activities increased during this period, although the amount of increase varied significantly with each survey and with each activity. The greatest increases were for bicycling (on paved surfaces), which almost doubled between 1987 and 1992, and hiking which increased about 50 percent during the same period.

Since the 1978 *California Recreational Trails Plan* was released, an unforeseen increase in the types of recreational trail has occurred. The popularity of mountain bikes and inline skates is a trend that has had a profound impact on trails in California. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of mountain bikes on trails. However, this trend has declined from its previous high of 15.3 million on-road mountain bikers and 8.6 million off-road mountain bikers in 1998 to 14.3 million on-road mountain bikers and 7.1 million off-road users during 2000.¹ Mountain bike enthusiasts retain a significant interest in California's trails and are well organized in the pursuit of those interests.



During the 1990s inline skating was one of the fastest growing trail-related activities in the state, and California had the greatest number of inline skaters². In 1990, there were 3.6 million participants; those numbers increased each year peaking at 27 million participants in 1998, then decreased to 21.8 million inline skaters during 2000.

To accommodate the many trail users more trails with various surfaces are needed that can accommodate appropriate trail user types. Equally critical is the ability to enhance cooperation and sharing of existing trails by the diverse user groups.

¹ The National Sporting Goods Association: *Ten Year History of Selected Sports Participation*
www.nsga.org.

² *ibid*

VII. Societal Benefits of Trails

The benefits associated with greenways and trails are many, both direct and indirect. The most often cited benefit is the promotion of exercise with its associated health enhancements, both physical and mental. Perhaps equally valuable are the economic benefits derived from the protected open space that adds value to local housing and provides and an attractive incentive for businesses to relocate into or remain in communities that emphasize the importance of greenways and trails.

Health Benefits of Trails

A recent Surgeon General's report concluded that more than 60 percent of American adults do not achieve the recommended amount of physical activity and 25 percent of adults are not physically active at all.³ Walking, hiking, running, riding horses or bicycles, skiing, skating, and propelling a wheelchair are aerobic exercises that benefit physical health when done regularly. Regular exercise has been proven to reduce heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), and cholesterol, and is believed to slow the aging process, reduce symptoms of osteoporosis, prevent and control diabetes, strengthen the immune system, improve arthritis, and relieve pain.

Regular exercise improves mental health by reducing stress and symptoms of depression. Trail use can improve mental health by providing a sense of open space (something missing in many urban environments) and opportunities for fun.

Recreation Benefits of Trails

Everyone needs to have fun, and according to the California Department of Parks and Recreation survey "Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California - 1997," the most popular trail-related activities were walking, hiking, jogging, running, mountain biking and horseback riding. Many trails have multiple recreation benefits such as providing access to fishing, vista points for photography, picnic areas for socializing, and camping areas. They also provide access to areas for enjoying solitude, observing wildlife and experiencing the natural environment.

³ Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health, July 1996.

Transportation and Clean Air Benefits of Trails

When used as transportation corridors, trails provide access to work, parks, school, entertainment, and other activities. California is famous for many things, including traffic congestion and some of the smoggiest regions on earth. But now, in part due to state and federal environmental legislation, transportation agencies have increased their efforts to promote and provide alternatives to the automobile. For example, the California Transportation Plan emphasizes bicycling as a transportation alternative. In addition, the Federal Highway Administration's current policy statement on "Integrating Bicycling and Walking into Transportation Infrastructure"⁴ emphasizes the importance of incorporating bicycling and walking facilities into all transportation projects unless exceptional circumstances exist. The agency's *Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach* is a policy statement that the USDOT hopes public agencies, professional associations, advocacy groups, and others adopt as a way of committing themselves to integrating bicycling and walking into the transportation mainstream.

Everyday, Californians who bicycle instead of drive prevent about 7 tons of smog-forming gasses and particles from polluting the air.⁵ Greenways help clean the air; trees and plants filter many pollutants and carcinogens.

Economic Benefits of Trails

Trails and greenways provide economic benefits to communities, real estate owners, and the health care system. Local trail users, vacationers and conference attendees provide direct economic benefits and increased sales tax revenues⁶ to communities when they purchase equipment, meals, lodging, and transportation from local retailers. Communities that offer trails for recreation and transportation also have a better chance of attracting conferences and new businesses, each of which businesses attract employees who value trails and greenways.

Several studies show that trails also increase property values. Many buyers prefer real estate near recreation facilities, and new developments often provide and advertise convenient trail access. In the 1997 "Public Opinions and Attitudes..." survey, 65 percent of those responding agreed with the statement

⁴ www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/Design.htm

⁵ "Improving California Air Quality through Increased Bicycling." March 27, 1998. California Air Resources Board.

⁶ "The Economic Benefits of Rail-Trails" at www.railtrails.org/econfct.html

“outdoor recreation areas and facilities increase the value of nearby residential and commercial property.” Less than 7 percent disagreed.

However, the property value issue traditionally has been debated, especially concerning crime and other potentially negative impacts. While these can be valid concerns, more often they are not. Therefore, providing accessible and accurate information about property values, crime mitigation, and other trail and greenway concerns is an important way to help landowners and their communities.

And finally, the health care system can further benefit economically from increased use of trails and greenways. People who use trails to exercise and/or enjoy cleaner air are generally healthier—thereby reducing both the personal out-of-pocket expenses and claims.

Social Benefits of Trails

Trails provide an opportunity for social interaction among other trail users in pleasant settings that foster team and relationship building. Urban trails often provide an opportunity for neighbors to socialize, building a stronger sense of community. Trails also benefit family activities. Hiking, biking and walking with strollers are examples of typically low-cost activities that most age and ability levels can enjoy, especially when trails are designed with accessibility in mind.

Educational Benefits of Trails

Trail users can learn about the natural, historical and cultural resources of California, many examples of which can be found along trails or accessed by trails. Trails are a ideal destinations for school field trips and support outdoor classrooms for universities and colleges. Trail users can develop an appreciation for our state’s often fragile resources through observation, photography, interpretive signs, publications and presentations. Enjoyable and interesting trail experiences can spur personal commitments to support parks financially, politically, as a volunteer or as an employee.

Energy Conservation Benefits of Trails

Fossil fuel consumption continues to be a long-term concern as demand increases and resources become depleted. While many uses of personal leisure time, from watching television to water skiing, require electricity or fossil fuels, using trails to bicycle, walk, or horseback ride is an effective way to conserve energy. Trails in many urban areas have become popular work commute routes for bicyclists.



Environmental and Resource Protection Benefits of Trails

Trails can be used as a tool for resource protection. When properly designed and signed, trails mitigate damage by controlling public access when they route visitors through or around sensitive resource areas. Vernal pools, unique riparian habitats, archeological sites, and threatened or endangered species habitats are examples of resources that can benefit from well designed and managed trails.

Greenways create habitat and travel corridors for wildlife. Proposed open space projects that include trails are more likely to be supported by the general public. Accessible trails encourage the public to visit natural areas, thereby raising their awareness and appreciation of these special limited resources.

VIII. California's Changing Demographics

Historically, opportunities for economic gain have been the primary driving force behind the changes in California's demographics. The 18th century Spanish, the 19th century gold miners, and the 20th century workers needed for the war industries and later microelectronics industries have brought change to the racial, cultural, and economic fortunes of those calling California their home. Each influx of new immigrants has created both opportunities for and impacts on the resident populations and on the immigrants.

The continuing growth of California's population is probably the most important trend impacting trails. When the 1978 *California Recreational Trail Plan* was published, the state's population was 23 million. For the year 2000, California's population was estimated at 34 million, a 48 percent increase.

While California, as an entity, may have matured over the past two centuries, its population remains young-at-heart even though the median age is slowly increasing. According to Department of Finance estimates, the largest portion of population increase from 2000-2010 will be in the over-45 age group. An aging population will require trails to be more accessible to accommodate a range of mobility limitations.

Growing populations drive land development and concurrently increase demands for recreational open space, including trail corridors and greenways. Yet land development for the homes, businesses and highways that are required to support growing economies occurs at the expense of open space.

Another demographic change affecting trails is California's evolving ethnic make-up. The Department of Finance estimates that from 2000-2010 the Caucasian portion of California's population will decrease from 49 percent to 45 percent, while all other ethnic groups will increase from 51 percent to 55 percent. Increasing numbers of school-age immigrant children with needs for an ever-widening array of recreational pursuits will likely create pressure for additional trails and for more trail multi-use diversity. These changes require insight into what will make trails appealing and relevant to more of the population.

XI. Program Goals

The Statewide Trails Plan must remain relatively general in scope, identifying only today's ideal goals for specific aspects of the statewide trails plan. The dynamics of our society and its constantly evolving recreational needs, coupled with annual funding unpredictability and changing political priorities, preclude including specific and nonflexible actions that are designed as the only avenues for reaching each of the general goals listed.

This plan's goals and the associated action guidelines provide the directional flexibility that will allow for meeting unforeseen changes that could impact trail programs. Yet within the action guidelines solid direction is given that will ensure partial or complete accomplishment of the goals for creating and maintaining a well designed, well used, and well maintained statewide system of trails and greenways.

While the ideal situation is for the following goals and their action guidelines to be implemented immediately, funding and staffing availability will control the timeliness of their realization. Many of these action guidelines are dependent, at least in some part, on needed funding, staffing and actions by other agencies. Continued cooperation and communication among the agencies and with trails advocates and special interest organizations will be greatly beneficial in helping us reach our intended goals.

GOAL FOR FUNDING

A successful statewide trails and greenways program requires continual, broad-based sources of funding that are regularly available in order to establish and maintain a balanced program for planning, acquisition, development, maintenance, and management of trails. Additional funding is always needed to pay for deferred maintenance, for the relocation and rehabilitation of old trails and to address increasing trail use.

Goal:

Develop adequate and stable funding for planning, acquisition, development and management of trails.

Action Guidelines:

- Promote continued state funding and identify new funding sources for acquisition and development of trails or to formalize traditional trail routes that may be severed by development.

- Encourage public agencies to incorporate trails and trails planning into their normal organizational infrastructure, including the development of annual operation and maintenance budgets to adequately care for trails.
- Leverage available funds through the use of matching grants. Increase the trail labor pool through public/private cooperation, including funding, donated materials, and volunteer labor.
- Provide grant programs or other funding to encourage development of local trail system plans. The availability of a designated funding source specifically for trail system planning would encourage reluctant agencies to join in the planning process.

GOAL FOR TRAILS INVENTORY

The overall goal is to establish a true “system” of trails throughout California. Reaching the goal will require an awareness of what resources and connective links are currently available and what links may be planned. It is critical that all trails planners have available accurate, comprehensive, regularly updated, and easily accessible databases of completed trails and planned trail projects. Such information can guide future trail-related land acquisitions and funding priorities and focus trails’ advocacy efforts in a more efficient and effective manner.

Goal:

Prepare regional and statewide inventories of existing, planned, and potential trails.

Action Guidelines

- Design and complete a survey of all State Park trails and establish a easily master trail database, along with procedures and protocols for maintaining accurate data. Make data available on the internet.
- Encourage local communities, government and organizations to contribute trail data, including both current trail information and planned trails, to readily accessible trail databases.
- Encourage increased data gathering regarding trail use, including numbers of trail users, types of trail use (equestrian, hiking, mountain bike, etc.), miles traveled, most popular trails, visitor surveys and other information that may be useful or required for adequate planning, development, operation and maintenance activities.

GOAL for REGIONAL AND STATEWIDE LAND-USE PLANNING

Closely allied with the trails inventory goal, professional planning is crucial for establishing and maintaining trails that are properly located and sited, that meet public needs, and that can be well maintained at minimum cost. As communities expand their residential and business developments, especially as they approach or border on park boundaries, there exists a growing need to meet increasing public demand for multi-use trails that connect with nearby state, federal, and local government parks and greenways. Actively involving interested individuals and special interest groups in the initial land use and trail planning stages is invaluable to the trail development process.

Ultimately, shared resources will maximize the usefulness of trails and will decrease construction and maintenance costs. Strengthening bonds between federal, state, and local agencies ensures community participation in the planning process and continuing support in the development and maintenance of trails.

Goal

Promote and encourage the incorporation of trails and greenways development and linkages into all local and statewide land use planning processes

Action Guidelines

- Recommend amending the California Subdivision Map Act to require a trail element in all future local government plans.
- In cooperation with other trail management agencies and organizations, develop standardized policies, guidelines and educational support programs for trail system planning, including products and processes to stimulate trail system planning by:
 - Using trail inventories as a key planning tool.
 - Coordinating to the extent possible local and regional planning efforts
 - Identifying trails that should be connected
 - Promoting regional trail planning forums, and
 - Educating trail planners on common goals.

- Educate local planners and decision makers about the value of including trails in their initial land use planning efforts.
- Encourage local government agencies to develop trail system plans by making it a requirement for submitting a grant application or give preference to those grant applicants with a local or regionally adopted trail system plan.
- Provide open space corridors with adequate space to accommodate trails and allow areas for wildlife habitat and sensitive ecosystems.
- Establish and link web sites to assist state, local, and federal trail system planners. This may include the California Trails Connection website, which is proposed to include information on California trails. Support and encourage development of a national website, which can provide standardized information.
- Develop and maintain all trail maps on a GIS (Geographic Information System). Create GIS maps of all public trails in California. The GIS maps would also serve as an overlay for all planners in developing and updating land use plans in California.

GOAL FOR TRAIL ADVOCACY & COLLABORATION

A strong and dynamic trails advocacy program is essential for maintaining and expanding trail systems in California. As with any program or project that requires public and government support, collaboration of advocacy groups is critical in order to effect political and societal changes that are reflective of the identified trail program goals. Open and frequent communication can often help organizations that are initially in opposition find common ground and success in meeting their individual and shared goals.

Goal:

Develop and encourage expanded cooperation and collaboration among trail advocates, wildlife advocates, and cultural resource advocates to maximize resource protection, education, and trail use opportunities.

Action Guidelines

- Continue to convene and support trails conferences and workshops that share current information, promote diversity, plan future actions, and recognize significant achievements. The California Trails and Greenways

Conference, hosted by the California Dept. of Parks & Recreation since 1983, will be the premier trails conference held in California.

- Develop multi-jurisdictional plans for wildlife corridors. Since most wildlife corridors cover multi-jurisdictional areas, it is essential that planning discussions and activities include the land managers for the corridor region, as well as stakeholders and affected regulators.
- Encourage trail-supplying agencies to place an emphasis on providing more day-use trail opportunities close to urban areas. Divert use away from overused trails by promoting the use of trails that are typically underutilized, especially during peak days and times.
- Continue to provide trail design and construction training programs that include multi-agency participation in order to foster planning cooperation and widely accepted trail design standards.

GOAL for TRAIL RESEARCH

Identifying current trail uses and future trends, including population demographics, economic swings and changing trail use dynamics, will be critical in meeting the needs of California's growing numbers of trail users. Baseline resource information, while available in various forms and in various locations, is not readily identified or accessible to trail researchers.

Goal:

Assume the leadership role in developing, collecting and distributing research findings on trail related issues.

Action Guidelines

- Support or establish a program for accessing trail related research needs and for designing and initiating research projects. These should include conducting and publishing research on:
 - How trails can better meet the special needs of youth and seniors in California
 - Ecological benefits of good trail design, construction, and management
 - Social and cultural barriers and how they affect trail use
- Encourage and support scientific studies that address trail impacts on the environment. This will include developing baseline data and threshold guidelines for assessing the impact of trails on wildlife. Conduct necessary surveys to determine what baseline data is available to measure the impact of trails on wildlife. If necessary, conduct scientific studies, surveys, and

inventories to allow for the development of adequate baseline data to address the impacts of trails on wildlife, and to assess the adequacy of various mitigation measures. Develop studies of how managed areas can reduce impact versus impacts from unmanaged trespass situations. Using the data collected, develop carrying capacity/threshold guidelines and management policies for trails in sensitive areas.

- Develop an effective marketing program aimed at organizations and groups that could best use the research findings in order to increase trail accessibility and use.

GOAL FOR STATEWIDE TRAIL STEWARDSHIP

Trail stewardship differs greatly throughout California and even among trails maintained by specific landowners such as State Parks. Funding, operational priorities, original trail design, and knowledge and skills of trails maintenance personnel can affect the levels of stewardship available for trails. Ensuring that the highest levels of trail stewardship are maintained requires commitment from trail managers and the ability to incorporate state-of-the-art trail design, construction, and maintenance techniques.

Good design, construction, and maintenance improve trails by:

- Accommodating higher numbers and multiple types of users
- Minimizing environmental impacts, especially erosion
- Increasing a trail's appeal to users, which increases use
- Reducing the chance of trail failure
- Reducing maintenance needs
- Making trails more fun and safer to use, and
- Providing a greater variety of experiences.

Goal:

Promote adequate design, construction, relocation, and maintenance of trails in order to optimize public access and resource conservation.

Action Guidelines

- Provide training and educational information about state-of-the-art trail design and construction techniques to the trail builders by supporting trail maintenance and management courses and workshops and enabling trail managers and volunteers to attend education opportunities.
- Extend and improve delivery of initial and ongoing trail training opportunities to trail stewards, such as volunteers.

- Support efforts to assure that all levels of government provide adequate budgets for maintaining their trails.
- Conduct and distribute periodic reviews of new trail-related products or trends. Encourage trail managers to work with manufacturers to help resolve identified problems in new trail related products.

GOAL FOR ENCOURAGING PUBLIC USE OF TRAILS

An ongoing public information program is essential for assuring a successful trail program. All trail programs must include information about trail location, condition and access points; however, they should also include interpretation of the resources and education about the impacts of nonconforming trail use (from erosion caused by off-trail use to safety issues caused by incompatible trail users).

Goal:

Encourage public use of and support for trails programs throughout California

Action Guidelines

- Work toward developing a common database aimed at identifying trail accessibility and accommodation and, once developed, provide the information to the public. This would aid users in their understanding of the purpose and condition of any particular trail and aid them in deciding which trail best suits their needs.
- Promote volunteer participation in trail stewardship programs and support all stakeholder organizations that promote good trail stewardship, such as, adopt-a-trail programs, California Trail Days and National Trails Day.
- Support the public information and education efforts of land management agencies and other interested parties by:
 - Expanding agency and non-profits' trail-related website content and links
 - Expanding distribution of publications, especially regional and trail-specific maps and guidebooks, to libraries, visitor centers, park entrances, trailheads, travel agencies, etc.
 - Partnering with other agencies and trail user groups to produce informational materials.
- Encouraging and supporting the development and use of trails that are "close to home," and promoting the use of underutilized trails.

- Educate trail users, students, and trail advocates on the potential impact that trails and trail users have on wildlife and on the environment, based on scientific studies.

GOAL FOR TRAIL ACCESSIBILITY

There have been only limited efforts by both government and the private sector to provide detailed trail information. Trailhead informational signs have traditionally offered visitors limited information about a trail's accessibility. Distances between major points of interests or to other trail linkages has been the primary information available. Information about barriers, such as trail width, grade, obstacles, cross slope, and surface conditions has not been available.

There exists no centralized trails information source within California. The standardized use of trail accessibility descriptive language has been hampered further by an absence of any universally accepted trail construction standardization practices or policy guidelines.

Goal:

Provide trail users with easily accessible trails and accurate information on trail locations and conditions.

Action Guidelines

- Design and implement or support assessment surveys and research projects that will help determine trail user information needs. Develop a methodology and implement a program to collect data on the number of trail users, the type of use, reasons for choosing the trail, and the benefits users received. The results should be publicized and used to promote individual trails and general trail benefits, and to determine public information needs.
- Provide barrier-free or fully accessible trails that offer a variety of features and experiences. They should include trails which access unique natural, historical and cultural features, or other unique experiences, and should be accessible via a barrier-free or fully accessible trail whenever possible. Also, every effort should be made to provide accessible, continuous loop trails and/or trails that connect with other features that are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Assist communities and trail managers with trail assessment and design. Trail assessment would include assistance in determining a trail's specific usage possibilities, including evaluation of its entry and use obstacles and in analyzing all possible alternatives.

- Establish a technical assistance program for accessibility guidelines, including educational materials and training programs, to help trail managers design, construct and maintain the most accessible trails possible.

GOAL FOR MULTI-USE TRAIL COOPERATION

California's increasing population has created, and continues to create, a demand for differing types of trail uses. What originally were designed as narrow, single track equestrian and hiking trails, fail to meet the present-day needs of mountain bikers, road bike users, in-line skaters, runners and new user groups that may develop in the future.

While there has been some integrating or combining of different recreational user needs on individual trails, the efforts have not been universally successful. In many areas relatively parallel trails designed for different users, such as a paved bike trail and an equestrian trail nearby, have been constructed. While this approach effectively separates two or more relatively incompatible trail uses, it also is more expensive, both in initial construction costs and in ongoing maintenance costs. This parallel single-use multi-trail system may also increase impacts on natural resources.

Goal:

Provide the maximum opportunities for the public use of trails by encouraging the appropriate expansion of multi-use trails.

Action Guidelines

- Establish a public process, coupled with scientific data and documentation, for determining use groups appropriate for trails within State Parks.
- Assist parks in identifying and resolving conflicts between trail users.
- Prepare instructional materials aimed at informing the public on proper etiquette for multi-use trails.
- Involve user groups to help land managers make informed decisions regarding trail designation and design.

GOAL FOR PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS

The support and cooperation of private property owners is crucial to the continued use and development of trail systems, especially long distance trails that cross multiple jurisdictions. There exists no central depository of accurate information about the true benefits and impacts of trail use on private property. One of the difficulties lies in comparing private property-related trail experiences in one neighborhood or community with those in others.

Goal:

Work to identify and resolve conflicts between property owners and trail users and advocates.

Action Guidelines

- Encourage and support open and continuing dialogue among private property owners, community organizations, professional land use organizations such as farm and cattlemen associations, adjacent public property government entities, and trail expansion advocates regarding trail systems and needed links.
- Identify potential available inducements for private property owners to allow and support public trails.
- Establish, maintain, and disseminate trail use related statistical data, including community and economic benefits, trail-related crime information, and other appropriate and useful data.

GOAL FOR TRAILS PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

California State Parks Statewide Trails Office has historically served as the clearinghouse for trails related state and federal grants programs, primarily for state park unit and state park unit-related nonprofit grant applicants. The Office has acted as a consultant to outside agencies and nonprofits on trails-related issues and has served as the primary state-level trails proponent within California government.

Under Public Resources Code, Sections 5073.5 – 5074, the Governor has established the California Recreational Trails Committee and appoints its seven members. The Committee's responsibilities include coordinating trail planning and development among cities, counties, and districts; advising the Director of State Parks on the preparation and maintenance of the California Recreational Trails Plan; and studying and advising the Director on the problems and opportunities involved in recreational trails use on private property. The Director

of State Parks has delegated to the Statewide Trails Manager as the Committee's Executive Secretary.

Goal:

The California State Parks Statewide Trails Office will continue its guidance and leadership roles in promoting the advancement of trails and trails programs throughout California.

Action Guidelines

- The Statewide Trails Office will:
 - Work with the California Recreational Trails Committee to guide the implementation of the California Recreational Trails Plan.
 - The Statewide Trails Office will extend its efforts beyond the boundaries of state parks, working closely with other agencies and organizations to enhance trail quality and expand opportunities for linkages.
 - Provide grant proposal writing training opportunities and provide clearinghouse-related services for trail-related grant programs.
 - Sponsor and oversee the annual California Trails and Greenways Conference.
 - Provide public information regarding trails throughout California with emphasis on trails and linkages that occur within California State Parks.

GOAL FOR THE CALIFORNIA RIDING AND HIKING TRAIL

Governor Earl Warren authorized the California Riding and Hiking Trail in 1945 as an "accessible and continuous master-loop trail extending from San Diego County near the Mexican border, north through the Tehachapi and Sierra Nevada ranges to the Oregon border, returning southward through the Coast range." The California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) worked on developing the California Riding and Hiking Trail through the 1960s. The trail was to cover vast territory not wholly owned by the state, crossing hundreds of individual property owners' land, which required easements for its successful completion. Although, many property owners allowed the easements, many did not. After several decades of working on the trail and pursuing easements, DPR management concluded that the program required more resources than could be committed, and the Department discontinued formal efforts to complete the trail.

The California Riding and Hiking Trail Act was repealed in 1974 with the enactment of the California Recreational Trails Act.

Reasons beyond simply the difficulties experienced in pursuing a 3000-mile loop trail caused the Department to abandon the idea. It was believed that there was greater demand for, and a greater likelihood of success to be found in pursuing, shorter loop trail segments that could serve both trails and, where possible, transportation needs nearer to population centers, or in pursuing trail segments that connected lands already in public ownership.

Since the Department halted work on the CRHT, a number of the easements secured previously have been abandoned or quit claimed by the Department in response to requests by the landowners. A number of easements have been built on or encroached upon by private and even public interests. And still more are clouded as to the condition of the legal status of the easement. The Department estimates that it would require a team of lawyers or land agents two to four years to untangle the status of the previously secured easements. In a few cases, the Department has worked cooperatively with local cities or counties who have shown interest in taking up the cause for local trail segments. The Department's current policy is to hold title to the easements, unless legally ordered to divest our ownership through court action.

While the factors and logic that caused the Department to abandon the concept are still in evidence, the California Riding and Hiking Trail carries great symbolic meaning to several trails enthusiasts and remains a visionary ideal to these supporters. They continue to press the Department to keep the dream alive and moving forward.

Goal:

Evaluate the status of previously secured easements for the California Riding and Hiking Trail and evaluate the feasibility for continuance of the trail's expansion.

Action Guidelines

- Secure Graduate Students, interns or volunteers to organize the records of the previously secured easements and to identify the current active portions of the California Riding and Hiking Trail (CRHT) and their ownership.
- As funding becomes available research the ownership status and the uses and conditions of the previously secured easements that are not currently identified as active portions of the trail.
- Secure funding to hire a consultant to analyze the potential for completing the California Riding and Hiking Trail and to prepare a report to be presented to

the California Trails Committee for its recommendation for the future of the CRHT. If it is determined that the CRHT has significant potential for success:

- Seek funding through the State's General Fund, federal trails and transportation grant sources, and future Park Bond Acts to acquire land in fee title or to secure easements, consistent with other trails priorities;
- Identify new trails that may be in place or that are planned that could provide alternative linkages for the CRHT;
- Notify counties and cities in the vicinity of segments of the trail of the State's willingness to work cooperatively with them on the trail;
- Use the California Recreational Trails Committee to recognize official additions to the CRHT, should it be deemed appropriate for continuance of the project.

Appendix D

Efforts to make accurate information more easily accessible, some companies, non-profits and government agencies are developing Web sites that include information for all types of users. Some of the trail organizations that currently provide information about specific trails in California on their web sites include:

California Trails Connection, a searchable trail database currently under construction at www.Caltrails.org

American Trails at www.americantrails.org, and, also under construction in partnership with Beneficial Designs, Inc. at www.TrailExplorer.org

American Hiking Society at www.americanhiking.org

Recreational Opportunities on Federal Lands at www.recreation.gov

Great Outdoor Recreation Pages or GORP at www.gorp.com

Rails to Trails Conservancy at www.railtrails.org and

California State Parks at www.parks.ca.gov .

An important issue for all trail management agencies, and most user groups as well, is the proposed change to the Americans with Disability Act regarding trail accessibility. Standards for constructing or repairing trails, and for communicating accessibility information about trails are currently being developed for adoption into federal law. Current information on this topic can be found at www.access-board.gov. The Trail Explorer website is an example of a current project intended to help trail managers communicate current, specific accessibility information to trail users with various interests and needs.